Abstract: The purpose of this report is to summarise the progress on the new Scottish House Project (research that has been carried out into methods of assessing environmentally friendly housing layouts and design) and to propose a further stage in the research.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee agree to support the continuing development of the new Scottish House Project.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Following the previous report on this subject dated 6 March 2003 (Report No. 297/03) work has been progressing in partnership with Robert Gordon's University and Aberdeenshire Council who share the costs.

2.2 A project summary for the new Scottish House Project is set out as Appendix 1 showing five stages in all. The first stage (already agreed and underway) was for the short study of about nine months:-

- to review current knowledge and methods of assessing house design;
- to establish the set of issues that need to be addressed and their relative importance;
- to apply for grants (European or elsewhere) to support later stages of the research.

2.3 Work on Stage 1 has accordingly been progressing in partnership with RGU and Aberdeenshire Council. The review of the existing state of knowledge is well underway. To take the project forward a new partnership has also been established between RGU and the two Councils together with Communities Scotland, the Forestry Commission for Scotland and the Millbank Regeneration Project.

2.4 This partnership is based on a master plan commissioned by Clunie Estate for the sustainable redevelopment of Millbank, near Sauchen in Aberdeenshire. The intention is for the master plan to provide an example of best practice in environment-friendliness and to demonstrate a higher standard of design, both aesthetically and technically. The plan will provide a 30 year vision for the development of the village, which is to serve as a hub for the surrounding rural area and offers a location in which to construct a practical demonstration project of small houses of the future. It is intended as a later part of the project to identify a one off site for one or two
environmentally friendly houses within Angus. The role of RGU and the two Councils in the partnership is:-

- to monitor the environment friendliness of this housing development from its inception; and
- to develop best practice in the design of new housing generally through involvement in the development of a specific part of the Millbank project which is to be carried out by Communities Scotland.

2.5 The second demonstration project is intended to provide comparison in the form of two to three living/working units in Angus. However, no specific location for this has yet been identified.

2.6 Together, these demonstration projects form the basis of a new build for LIFE funding bid, led on this occasion by Robert Gordon’s University. If successful this LIFE project would be to the value of almost £3m in total over three years (from October 2004 to September 2007) to which Angus Council’s contribution would be entirely in the form of staff time. However, the purpose of the LIFE bid would also deliver the requirements of stages three to five of the new Scottish House Project as set out in Appendix 1.

3 PROPOSAL

3.1 With stage one of the new Scottish House Project underway, and the possibility that all the later stages (3-5) will be accounted for by the proposed LIFE bid (i.e. if the bid is successful) all that remains is to arrange Stage 2 as set out in Appendix 1. This stage will involve academic review of the findings from Stage 1, illustration of what sort of design the intended review will result in, and conclude arrangements for the trial developments in Aberdeenshire and Angus that are to incorporate the principles of the project

4 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The work envisaged from Angus Council Planning & Transport would only involve a portion of the time of one member of staff as part of their development control responsibilities.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposal is that Stage 2 is funded in the same way as Stage 1; the costs involved would be for a Post Graduate Researcher with academic supervision and administrative support at Robert Gordon’s University. Robert Gordon’s own support would be in the form of the on costs for the staff involved. Otherwise net costs would be £25k, spread over the two financial years 2003-04 and 2004-05 and shared between Angus Council (10k) and Aberdeenshire Council (£15k). This can be contained within the Planning & Transport Revenue Budget.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

7 CONSULTATION
7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Law & Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 This research is specifically intended to provide guidance on the interpretation of what sustainability means on the ground in an area of planning which at the present time remains the subject of considerable ongoing debate. It is recommended that the Committee support the development of the new Scottish House Project set out in this report and Appendix 1.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/RMcN/KW
23 February 2004

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Director of Planning and Transport
APPENDIX 1

“THE NEW SCOTTISH HOUSE” (NSH)

PROJECT SUMMARY

1. The NSH Project is primarily intended to develop a new objective method of assessing environment friendliness (a major element of sustainability) in house design including the design of affordable housing. If successful, it could also provide the basis of a new vernacular form of architecture for the north-east and possibly other parts of Scotland. The project which is currently in stage 1, is expected to run over four further stages of which it is hoped that stages three to five can be delivered under the auspices of a European Life Project.

2. Stage 1 – to review the current knowledge and methods, establish a set of issues that need to be addressed and their relative importance, and apply for grants (European and elsewhere) to support later stages of research, undertaken by a Post Graduate Researcher, with academic supervision and administrative support; £25k for nine months works; part/joint contributors directed by Dr. Brogden of Robert Gordon’s University with Angus Council and Aberdeenshire Council.

3. Stage 2 – to review the findings from stage 1, develop other illustrationss of the kind of designs the identified criteria would result in, and conclude arrangements for the trial developments that are to incorporate the principles, undertaken by a Post Graduate Researcher, with academic supervision and administrative support; £25k for nine month’s work; partner/joint contributors directed by Dr. Brogden of Robert Gordon’s University with Angus Council and Aberdeenshire Council.

4. Stages 3, 4 and 5 – review design guidance – regulations in Europe, visits to case study developments, redefine outcomes of Scottish House Project, construct demonstration developments, monitoring/feedback, develop assessment systems; three year life project to the value of approximately £3 million (Angus Council’s contribution staff time only), partners/joint contributors – Robert Gordon’s University with Angus Council and Aberdeenshire Council, Communities Scotland, Forestry Commission for Scotland, the Millbank Regeneration Project and the European LIFE Fund.